

THE
BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

VOL. XXXV. WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1846.

No. 18.

THE WATER CURE.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

THE work is done, the great question which has agitated science so many centuries is settled, health and everlasting youth may now always be found. Miss Catharine Beecher is the happy individual appointed by fate as the arbiter in the case, and she has rendered a solemn, irreversible judgment. She has come out god-mother to hydropathy, and with a furious onslaught upon the profession aimed a deadly blow with her dipper at the head of Æsculapius, which certainly would have proved fatal had the weapon been made of stouter material ; it was laid on with right good will, but his cranium has stood much harder whacks, and in this case, instead of a groan, he complacently smiles, and replies, Wait a little, my good woman, by-and-by you will be wiser.

In the New York Observer for October 24th, is a long and apparently gratuitous article (*à la Bulwer*) in favor of this bantling, in which it is necessary, of course, to cast a slur upon the profession of medicine, which is considered the scientific way of establishing any quackery : first prove that nobody else knows anything, and then it is very easy to show that we know everything. This worthy lady has seen fit to fall into the same beaten track, and having put down the profession, is ready, with a patronizing air, to lend a help to any new system which needs her aid. It is wonderful to see how many excellent women seek for immortality by attaching themselves to the suit of the professors of these new mysteries, who would have made a much better figure attending to their duties at home. There will no longer be necessity for clinical observation, no longer for deep, untiring research into the arcana of nature, no longer need of soiling the fingers and endangering life in the thankless examination of the dead ; cold water, the sovereign remedy of every ill, can dispense with these, and, circling through the veins, washes out every particle of disease with very little trouble to the operator and "most soothing and agreeable" sensations to the operatee. Ah ! blessed era for washer-women ! How should hotel chamber-maids rejoice ? There is no longer need of airing or drying sheets ; it is easy now to die in the height of fashion. The miserable wretches who have gone out of the world with pleurisy and rheumatism, from sleeping in these damp envelops, were entirely mistaken ; they were actually better for it,

or would have been had they not stopped too soon, or something or other "taken them away just at the most critical time of the cure."

To assert that water is a useless article of the *materia medica*, would be untrue: its properties have been long known, and it has an established place which no efforts of the fair champion can elevate or depress. Many were the observations made upon its use by learned and skilful men long before the days of Priessnitz or Miss Beecher. The objection we urge against it, is that it is not a cure-all, and such it is regarded by the water fraternity, the assertions of Miss Beecher to the contrary notwithstanding; even in her own opinion it is the only treatment of which anything is known, as she endorses the sentiment that physicians know nothing either of disease or remedies. But let us look a little into the article itself, and see if there may not be some defects of argument, something which may lead us to suspect that a weak judgment may have been swayed by considerations which a strong "*common sense*" would have resisted.

In the first place, we are to understand that three objects are aimed at by the article. First and mainly, that Miss Beecher, like Miss Martineau, is a patroness, and a new system of medicine hangs from her apron strings. Secondly, it is an excellent opportunity for showing the world that she understands a great deal about matters and things in general, and medicine in particular. Thirdly, it is intended as a capital advertisement for her protégé in Brattleboro'. We shall examine the article in these three respects, with as much brevity as circumstances will admit. It begins with a great deal of sympathy manifested for poor afflicted sufferers. Thus far it is the old story. We think, however, that the sufferings of the sick would be much less aggravated, were the care of them left to persons of experience, whose honesty and education are some guarantee that the best will be done which human ingenuity can devise; while the interference of incompetent persons has ever been, and probably ever will be, the means of swelling the amount of human woe. Daily experience fully satisfies every medical man of this fact. In order to establish the doctrines of hydropathy, she invokes the genius of Liebig and Billings. In respect to the latter of these, nothing at all is said in his work regarding the water cure, and even much less upon the use of water in *any* shape, than can probably be found in any medical treatise of the same size extant. Hear her. "He," Billings, "also shows that it is in agreement with the *common sense* views and practices of mankind in all ages. No person can read this work without conceding that he fully proves these positions." Now I have no doubt that Miss B. has been here grossly imposed upon; she could not herself have read the book. I can find but two or three allusions to water as a remedy in it; one of these being a recommendation of Liston's cotton and warm-water poultices in preference to the bread and water, used from time immemorial—and in another place, in a note, he says, that cold may be more safely used externally in inflammations of the cavities of the chest and abdomen than is commonly supposed *when the surface is hot*. To cite this as an author

in favor of hydropathy, shows a great want of authority, and would never have been done except to amuse or attract the public. The whole scope of his work is decidedly hostile to any such idea, and is not only opposed to hydropathy, but, when rightly understood, will be found one of the ablest treatises in opposition to homœopathy, though not apparently written against it, a humbug which fountains of cold water seem not entirely to have washed from the cranium of the fair champion. As to the statement that he proves hydropathy in agreement with the common-sense views and practices of mankind, it is, I believe, entirely false. A careful examination of the book has brought me to no such conclusion, but to one entirely the reverse; and such will be the opinion of every medical reader. She might with equal justice have quoted Shakspeare or the Koran. Liebig, too, is dragged in by the ears to take a part in the attack. Now Miss B. certainly cannot hope that the public should put greater confidence in Liebig than she herself does, since she calls him one of the greatest physicians. If Miss B., therefore, will not hear him on homœopathy (her other idol), why should she expect the public should on hydropathy. Let us hear what he says about it. "Without this scientific foundation," physiology, not cold water, "without a clear insight into the very essence of natural phenomena, without a solid physiological and chemical education, we are constantly liable to fall into the most serious errors of practice" (yet the ignorant Priessnitz is equal to anybody). "Can we wonder that men, wholly ignorant of physiology and chemistry, although in other respects rational, should adopt the absurd notions of Hahnemann, that his doctrines should prevail in Germany and find disciples in all countries? Reason alone will not prevent whole nations from falling into the most abject superstitions." Now as Miss B. probably cares very little for what Liebig says about the one, there will be no ground of complaint if we do not care what he says respecting the other, if indeed he has so said, of which I am not aware, and the above quotation would not lead me to infer.

Next, she says that Priessnitz "is a man of great genius, united with great sagacity and common sense." This is very true; he well knows how to make money, and in this respect exhibits much more sagacity and common sense than his disciples, and will follow his trade as long as their pockets hold out. He has, moreover, a remarkable tact in detecting those who would be likely to die under treatment, and carefully excludes such from his establishment, reserving those, only, who he perceives have vigor enough to live through. In this respect he certainly has shown more acuteness than some of his followers. The next position she takes is, that the treatment is not hazardous, and to prove it takes a very odd and round-about way. She says, "In reference to this, I will quote a few lines from Dr. Pereira, one of the most celebrated standard medical writers, in reference to the danger of using *drug medicines*." "Several physicians (as Murray and Thompson) consider opium as primarily *stimulant*; some, as Cullen and Barbier, regard it as *sedative* (that is, just the contrary of stimulant); Dr. Mayer considers it as a *stimulant* to the nerves and a *sedative* to the muscles and digestive or-

gans. Orfila regards it as *neither*; while others, as Müller, call it an *alterative*." That is, "five standard medical writers and physicians consider one of our most common and powerful drugs in five different and *contradictory* ways, and, of course, must give it for exactly opposing objects." She also quotes a long list from Pereira, showing that there were many opinions as to the *modus operandi* of mercury, which it is unnecessary to repeat, but she thus winds up. "After reading this, one is not surprised that a medical writer exclaims that the word physician should be defined as 'a man who puts drugs, of which he knows nothing, into a stomach of which he knows less.' In this view I regard the water cure as pre-eminent, because a person under a well-informed and careful physician is *perfectly safe from risks*." A lame and impotent reasoning! How logical, that cold water may be dashed over the feeble and delicate, or gulped by the barrel, without danger, because medical men have different views respecting the operation of certain remedies, and the peculiar vital action which results in cure. We think the fair judge made good use of her long abode among the mountains, and consulted the Doctor's library to excellent purpose, since it has resulted in such wisdom. A little practical knowledge would have convinced her that by the bed-side there is far more uniformity of opinion as respects treatment than she has supposed, among well-informed practitioners, and that although they may use different remedies, the same end may nevertheless be accomplished. One physician might prefer to bleed in an apoplexy, another to use croton oil, another the cold douche to the head, another mustard to the feet, and still another might use them all. Here we have different remedies, all operating in a different manner, yet each tending to cure. Are medical men fools because all do not rest upon the douche, neglecting the advantages of the others? But suppose physicians do differ as to the *class* of a remedy, whether a sedative or a stimulant; what has that to do with its operation? Observation settles that, not theory. What matters it, if lunar caustic is applied to an inflamed surface, whether it is *called* by one name or another? There is no intrinsic character in a drug, making it one or the other; it is its relation to the vitality of the body. If inflammation be excess of action, then we call the caustic a sedative; if it be loss of action, then we call it stimulant; and sometimes we name it one thing and sometimes the other, in the progress of a case. Physicians look upon disease practically the same, though their remedies may be applied under different designations, making in reality far less discrepancy than quacks and their dupes are willing to believe. The tact and experience of one physician may suggest a remedy which would not be preferred by another. But this is a thing of hourly occurrence in the every-day concerns of life. One prefers to travel by the steamboat, another by the rail road, and another may prefer to go on foot; yet all may find themselves finally at the same point. Moreover, similar diseases in different countries, and often in different parts of the same country, present points of disagreement both in their symptoms and the treatment which those symptoms bear. Are physicians fools because they do not perfectly agree? Is ex-

perience good for nothing here, but excellent in hydropathy? If it is, is not that of two thousand years' growth better than that of twenty years? Nor are medical men to be ridiculed because they have not theoretically settled to their own satisfaction what is the essence of disease, since life itself is known only by its operation; just so is disease, which is but an altered state of vitality, whether we call that state one of exaltation or depression. The name given is practically of little importance, provided it gives indications clear enough to suggest an appropriate remedy. But is *hydropathy* to throw any light upon this subject? Alas! no; since cold water is considered by some a *sedative*, by some a *stimulant*, and by others *both*, according to the state of the system, which puts water in the same category with those dreadful poisons. Does discrepancy, in the opinion of Miss B., make calomel dangerous and opium dangerous and to be avoided, and yet have no effect on water? Truly, by the same judgment, that also must fall. Moreover, respecting the use of this fluid, I may say, in passing, that there are heads as wise and respectable as her own, who look upon *cold water* as dangerous to the system and prefer to use it in the form of *steam*; and if numbers are of any weight, hydropathy would quickly kick the beam. Thus much in attempting to prove the water cure harmless, by proving drugs dangerous. But hear her a little further. "Those who have witnessed the astounding, and, in some cases, *apparently* alarming effects of this treatment, never would recommend any person to attempt it, in any serious cases, except when within reach of a physician of experience in this mode of treatment. And since I have been here, I have become convinced that the use of the shower bath, which is becoming so very extensive and common, often involves far more hazard than most persons suppose." Really, the writer of that makes out hydropathy to be more hazardous than even we had suspected. We shall hardly dare to touch a wash-hand basin without, according to her advice, giving Dr. Wesselhoeft the symptoms. We are inclined to think that Miss B. has witnessed some consequences at Brattleboro', or elsewhere, which she would not exactly like to have known. It is a little curious to see the word *apparently* italicized, as if the effects were appalling only to appearance, even while at the same time she is endeavoring to prove that they are so sometimes in reality. Why, if this effect is only *apparently* manifest, is there any need of a physician standing at the elbow, and that, too, a physician of more than common skill, unless the *apparently* is apt to be changed into the *really* alarming?

The writer herself has candidly explained all the advantages of the water cure: they are "the rigid observance of diet, pure air, pure water, hard beds, well-ventilated rooms, vigorous exercise, regular hours, freedom from intellectual labor and exciting emotions;" and we have no doubt that these would cure the greater part of the nervous, irritable, dyspeptic and gouty, who visit those places, whose constitutions have been shattered by inactivity at home, or by intense application to business, or have been rendered irritable through the ennui consequent upon wealth, without the aid of the "frequent bathing," which she has also

added. Probably equal good would be elicited by a ramble over the Catskill, and a regular air bath on its mountain top, at sunrise. Our amiable friend wonders that physicians do not more insist upon their patients observing the laws of hygiene. We answer, that so far as considered absolutely necessary, they are insisted upon; but that generally such rigor is not needed; and if it was, as respects those who frequent watering places, such rules would not be perfectly obeyed. They, for the most part, belong to a class dissatisfied with everything, and who run from one system to another, and from one extreme to its opposite. There are multitudes who would not follow their physician's advice, yet who could, nevertheless, swallow the potions of the empiric with all the complacency in the world, or submit to any treatment he might recommend, no matter how difficult or expensive. Such have the organ of wonder largely developed, and at an earlier day would have been found fighting strenuously for witchcraft.

The poor sufferer must be very much obliged for the information Miss B. has communicated, since a "*long time*" is generally required to be relieved. "Probably the average is from six months to a year, while it is impossible to predict the time of cure." Physicians must succeed in a few days, or *their* patients are off to somebody else, to undergo probably the same treatment; while one or two years are demanded by this wonderful practice. How very consoling!

Miss B. gives us an abundance of good reasons why everybody does not get well under the water cure. They go off too soon; they become poor, and are glad to save their pantaloons after losing everything in their pockets; they *will* be treated, in spite of all Dr. Wesselhoeft can do to prevent, and, of course, die. She goes on to caution new comers in these words—"In all cases the first effect of the treatment is a sudden invigoration of the system and relief from bad symptoms, awakening the hope of a speedy cure. After a month or two, or *more*, this is followed (in many cases, but not in all) by a discouraging prostration and agitation of the system, sometimes attended by boils and other eruptions, and sometimes by hemorrhages." These she hails as harbingers of cure, and says, "*they never, except from mismanagement, produce fatal or permanently injurious results;*" intimating that they do sometimes, without peculiar care. One would think, certainly, from this statement, that there was a great deal of risk, in spite of our champion's boldness. These symptoms, the proof of an impoverished blood, and a system broken down by this diluting treatment, would make any careful and really competent physician feel a little uneasy about pressing matters further. Perhaps this is the critical moment when other help is called for, as now to be explained. She mentions a little fact, which of course is not very important in the eyes of the fair writer, but of some little interest to the public, and thus goes on—"In regard to the use of medicines, at this institution, two physicians, bearing the diplomas of European universities, and professing to understand both allopathy and homœopathy (as all are required to do in most German universities), I have myself seen using both modes of medical treatment, in cases where drug medi-

cines" (which she puts in contradistinction with the drench medicine) "were considered desirable as aiding and hastening the work of the water cure. And my confidence cannot but be greater in physicians who have studied *all* the various theories, &c. &c." ; that is, medicines are given to cure, and the water cure takes the credit ; exactly so, we understand it, though one would suppose, after what she has said upon "*drugs*," she would have a wholesome fear of them. We are therefore to suppose that Dr. Wesselhœft knows better than anybody else their nature, and what they are put into. We would, moreover, add, that the physician who seeks Miss Beecher's practice, must certainly be an extraordinary genius, for it would require no little time to learn even the names of all the systems now in existence, and those which have been, much more the thousand particulars in each, on which alone success depends. A word, in passing, respecting the requirements of European universities. We can hardly credit the statement that a knowledge both of allopathy (that is, the practice of medicine) and homœopathy is required at any medical institutions, except homœopathic schools. Certain it is, that one might as well look for the bones of the prophets as for homœopathy in Paris, the great centre of medical literature, and formerly the flourishing abode of Hahnemann himself and a crowd of followers. We would say, however, that in one sense the two systems *are taught* in most European and American universities, but that homœopathy is dismissed not very honorably with few and very laconic remarks, but yet quite enough to explain all its merits.

The article now winds up with the advertising part, viz., that Dr. Wesselhœft is a dear good man, that he is remarkably *sagacious, honest and benevolent*, and that *his* water establishment is superior to any other in the country (Miss B. having, probably, tried the merits of all). We certainly wish Dr. Wesselhœft all the success the water cure merits ; and probably *his* establishment is as good as anybody's else where diseases are flooded out as woodchucks from their holes, and he as worthy as most foreigners who come from nobody knows where or for what ; but we object to this universal application of *any* remedy, particularly when long and extensive experience in the practice of the ablest physicians of this and other ages has proved it limited in its powers, and sometimes deadly in its effects. If any advocate of the water cure doubts this, let him read the coroner's decision respecting the case of Richard Dresser, treated hydropathically, and suddenly destroyed. The report will be found in the London Lancet, New Series, Vol. IV., No. 2. This is but one of a multitude of cases which are to be found in turning over the pages of our journals (though by far the larger part must escape notice), and should be a warning to the public not to reject the advice of those whose duty and pleasure it is to warn against the thousand dangers to which life is every moment exposed, and of which one of the greatest is quackery, even though it may be supported by talent and money.

Let it not be understood that I cherish any ill will against the worthy woman who heralds herself a convert to the water cure. I have none ; and as a friendly advice to her and the Reverend gentlemen whose

names are appended to pill-boxes and nostrums, hope I may be permitted to say, they add very little to their own dignity by thus doing, and lessen their influence with the public, the more sensible part of whom know, that on matters concerning which they know nothing, their opinion is of the same value with that of the most illiterate peasant. We hope, therefore, Miss Beecher will not see fit to inform the world what new crotchet she may have in her head, or what new humbug she intends to support; for we can assure her that it is of vastly less importance than she supposes, though it will be taken for granted that, with her, as with many others, any new one will be received with favor. Time, which has sunk in oblivion system after system of quackery, sustained, as they each undoubtedly were, by an array of amazing smart women, and good men, but whose wits had not been trained to the thorough investigation demanded by the subject, and whose unstable minds jumped from one error to another, as truth overthrew their foothold on the last, will in like manner treat this new birth; and the high-sounding paragraphs written in its favor, will serve only for a mortifying topic of reflection in after years.

GALEN.

THE INHALATION OF AN ETHEREAL VAPOR TO PREVENT SENSIBILITY TO PAIN DURING SURGICAL OPERATIONS,

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR.—That which has always been a desideratum in surgery, seems, at length, to have been discovered. And if the effects of the agent or agents be such as has been reported, of which there is little room to doubt since the appearance of the article in a late No. of your Journal, by Dr. Bigelow, Jr., every one who has any sympathy for human suffering must rejoice in the discovery; and all who are called upon professionally to perform painful operations must feel desirous to avail themselves of the means of diminishing or destroying that state of consciousness which recognizes all violence done to the sensitive tissues of the body, while such operations are in process.

But it appears, from numerous statements, and through your correspondent, Dr. B., who speaks with much authority on the subject, that the article used is a secret, or patented affair.

Now the enlightened and regular medical faculty of Massachusetts (as well as of other parts of our country), are associated and have arrayed themselves against all secret remedies, or patent medicines, and this for the just and laudable purpose of protecting the community, as far as might be, from imposition, and of preserving the integrity and standing of the profession; they cannot, therefore, feel themselves at liberty, as I judge, to seek aid for their patients through the adoption of such articles and means.

If I wish to furnish those by whom I am called upon to operate in painful cases with the relief which this new discovery may afford, I am told I must obtain it and use it as a secret, or purchase the patented arti-

ticle and employ it as such. But I ask why? It is said to be, by those who really do, or who assume to know what it is, the vapor of sulphuric ether only. This was judged to be the agent by several who witnessed some of its earliest public exhibitions under the hands of Mr. W. T. G. Morton. Dr. E. R. Smilie, of this city, with all due candor and liberality, has given, in your Journal for Oct. 28th, an account of his experience with sulphuric ether and opium, the effects of which he says are similar to those produced by the "new gas."

The free use of the article has been ceded to the surgeons of the Massachusetts General Hospital, and these gentlemen would receive it or adopt its use, on no other condition, of course, than that of knowing what it was, and having the full and free control of it for that institution. Hence, I ask, why, if I wish to avail myself of any of the possible effects of an article of our *Materia medica*—an article which I have administered to patients hundreds of times, which I have often swallowed, and have inhaled till I was all but lost in sleep—why I must now purchase the right to use it, and use it as a patent medicine.

But we are still told that *it is patented*. What is patented? A power? A principle? A natural effect? The operation of a well-known medicinal agent? I doubt the validity of such letters patent. It would seem to me like *patent sun-light* or *patent moon-shine*.

To my mind it seems unfortunate, to say the least, that the discovery has not been brought to public notice in a different manner and under different circumstances. And I am sorry that Dr. Bigelow, in his article above mentioned, has attempted to apologize for the arrangements which he says have been made by Dr. C. T. Jackson as one of the parties, to secure by patent the control of a medicinal agent like the one in question. The doctor seems to feel very fully his position in relation to this point, when he says,

"For various reasons, discoveries in high science have been usually rewarded, indirectly by fame, honor, position, and occasionally, in other countries, by funds appropriated for the purpose. Discoveries in medical science, whose domain approaches so nearly that of philanthropy, have been generally ranked with them; and many will assent with reluctance to the propriety of restricting by letters patent the use of an agent capable of mitigating human suffering."

Of the three reasons which he offers as worthy of consideration in this behalf, two are, to my mind, entirely without force sufficient to be any excuse for such a measure; and the total incorrectness of the main part of the third, must be apparent to all who are at all acquainted with the subjects on which it is made to bear.

"1st. It is capable of abuse, and can readily be applied to nefarious ends."

If, however, the right is to be sold, and every opportunity is to be improved to *make money* of it, and all may buy who please, I do not see how the abuses to which it may possibly be put by evil-minded persons are to be restricted by a patent. And any one vile enough to use such an agent for nefarious purposes, would not stop to ask about his *right* to do so.

"2d. Its action is not yet thoroughly understood, and its use should be restricted to responsible persons."

Who are the most responsible persons to be trusted with this agent? All will assent, no doubt, that they are such as are most likely to be acquainted with the properties of the article, with the nature of those unpleasant symptoms which *may* occur from the use of it, and have occurred in certain constitutions, and with such antidotes or remedies as should be used if required; or, in three words, regular physicians, surgeons and dentists. And I am at a loss to see why the use of the discovery would not be as safe in such hands as in those of "*the proprietor*" so called.

"3d. One of its greatest fields is the mechanical art of dentistry, many of whose processes are by convention, secret, or protected by patent rights."

Who is there that bestows a thought on the subject, who will not see at once, that this narcotizing process of inhaling the ether has nothing to do with the *mechanical* operations of dentistry, but only with those which are strictly surgical, those which Dr. B., in speaking of the importance of this process, couples with *amputations*.

As to that part of this third apology, which charges dentistry or its professors with holding secrets, by convention, or by the security of patent, I must view the writer as being entirely in error; for if there is truth in the charge, I cannot find it. I do not know of anything which is practised in dentistry, in our own country, even relating to the mechanical department, which is kept secret by or from the duly educated dentists. [How this is with the host of ignorant pretenders, and advertising impostors, I know not.] And with regard to a patent for any process in the art, or even for an instrument, I do not know that such a thing exists, nor am I willing to believe, without greater evidence than the doctor's assertion, that a patent can be found that has any especial bearing on the subject of dentistry.

I have been asked, by a member of the Massachusetts Medical Society—a respectable and excellent dentist of this city, what I intended to do about using the "new gas," stating that he had used it and knew what it was, and when questioned by me directly, did not hesitate to say, "it is simply sulphuric ether"; but added, "the discovery is patented." My reply to him was, "I shall not obtain and use it as a *secret medicine*—I shall not purchase and use it as a *patent medicine*. If it is simple sulphuric ether, and it will produce the desired effect, I shall use it, and so will others who wish to do so." If it is a compound, as still advertised to be by Mr. Morton, it is said to be ceded to the surgeons of the Massachusetts General Hospital. These gentlemen, it is to be presumed, will not consent to hold it as a *secret* or *patent medicine*; and if known to the medical students who are privileged to attend that institution for the purpose of acquiring information and obtaining instruction in all that is done there pertaining to their profession, no one, as I judge, can rightfully restrict them from using what is there used for the relief of suffering humanity; and it will become, as it ought to be, free to all who should be trusted to do good with it, or who can receive relief from suffering by it.

To patent it would be, what it would have been for the immortal philanthropist Jenner to have patented vaccination.

These, Mr. Editor, are some of my thoughts on the subject; and if I am in error for holding them, or for thus giving them to the public, you are able, no doubt, and will be ready, to set me right. J. F. FLAGG.

No. 31 Winter street, Boston, Nov. 23d, 1846.

DR. C. HALL ON THE FEVERS OF THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal —Concluded from page 358.]

I HAVE suggested that the fevers of the Champlain valley are mostly of the congestive and inflammatory character, and require prompt recourse to the antiphlogistic treatment. Though this, in the abstract, be true, fevers are nevertheless so modified by circumstances as to forbid any precise rule of practice. Yet all our febrile diseases, it is believed, demand depletive remedial means of some kind; and among these blood-letting occupies a conspicuous place—a remedy potent in skilful hands, but liable, in common use, to be misapplied, or used in excess. Like other valuable reagents, it has been applauded or condemned in proportion as it has been followed by favorable or unfavorable results. To secure its benefits, therefore, the utmost caution in its administration seems to be required. For, unlike the effects of many other therapeutic agents used in excess or wrongly applied, the recuperative powers of the system repairing the injury, the abstraction of blood might result in irreparable loss of power, which no counter force could make up. In view of this, it may be well, in the outset of fevers, where no prominent motive for bleeding is indicated, such as decided local pain, hardness of pulse or special determination of blood to the head, to resort first to other depletive means—trusting to an emetic followed by a full dose of calomel, to accomplish the object. These, in many instances, from their revulsive effects, as well as emptying the stomach and bowels, have apparently overcome capillary congestion and determined the blood to the surface—thereby removing congestion, the proximate cause of inflammation.

This mode of depletion has sometimes succeeded where venesection seemed to be demanded at first. Yet at other times, under similar indications, it has failed; the pain, at first shifting and uncertain, becoming afterwards concentrated in some vital part, setting at naught all therapeutic efforts. In such cases, much depends upon discriminating tact, in view of all the diagnostic indications, in regard to the propriety of abstracting blood. The writer deems it the safer course, under doubtful circumstances, to let blood in the congestive stage of the fever, having had occasion to regret its neglect, in many instances, where venesection seemed to have been fatally omitted.

Popular prejudice, in regard to blood-letting, has its baneful influence in the treatment of fevers, as well as other prejudicial agencies. One untimely and unfortunate application of the lancet, might lead to irrecoverable mischief, from popular impulse, by its subsequent disuse when really

needed. This influence might prove too strong for the modest practitioner to pursue the line of his duty ; and the patient die for want of bleeding. Though laying no claims to modesty on my part, I am free to confess that I have been placed in this predicament. My greatest regrets, in treating the "erysipelatous fever" of 1842, arose from having neglected to bleed when my private judgment pointed to this remedy.

On being called to the sick, these points of inquiry naturally present themselves :—What are the habits of the patient ? What is the type of the disorder ? And what the pathology of the circulation ? And relying upon these premises, the principal object to be attained is the free state of the lungs and arterial system. If these organs labor to overcome capillary congestion, more blood being received into the capillaries than can be circulated through them, ordinary cathartics and diaphoretics proving ineffectual (these being resorted to generally before the physician), how is the barrier to be removed ? Why, sound philosophy, as well as common sense, would dictate that it is to be done by abstracting a portion of the "vital fluid," the "cruor sanguinis," the "fibrine of the blood," if you please. By thus reducing the volume of blood, freedom is given to the reduced quantity, the engorgement being lessened ; and the circulation becomes equalized. When this is done in due quantity and in time, revelents, diaphoretics, rubefacients, and counter-irritants, may be applied with effect. Although there be a reduction of the fibrine, still if the fever be inflammatory, there is, according to Andral, an increase of fibrine, which for a time will continue to increase in spite of venesection."

This mode of depletion, in my hands, has appeared to sustain the theory. Yet I have witnessed better results from repeated small bleedings, than from a copious abstraction of blood at once ; and still better where it has been by scarifying and cupping. By this method there appears to be something gained, aside from the reduction of blood. It seems to have a special influence in taking off the stricture of the capillary vessels, and diverting the circulation from the suffering organs to the skin. Illustration—Mrs. M., a woman of sanguineous temperament, a widow, and mother of several children, aged 36 years. At each periodicity her lungs became congested, eyes bloodshot, face purple and suffused, attended with spitting of blood. Her respirations were labored and nearly suffocated, pulse feeble and small, extremities cold and benumbed, the stomach rejecting everything taken into it—the groans and other indications denoting fatal suffocation. As general bleeding was impracticable, and external warmth and rubefacients ineffectual, as a last resort I applied the scarificator and cup to the point of the greatest heat, being the pit of the stomach ; and although scarcely a tea-spoonful of blood was abstracted, decided and instantaneous relief followed. The pulse came up, heat returned to the skin and extremities, purpureal expression removed, no more sighing, no more hæmoptysis, the respirations becoming quiet and the stomach settled. Having at various times attended the same woman under similar circumstances, without being able to afford any essential relief, the patient, after several days of extreme

suffering, partially recovering, I was perfectly surprised at this sudden effect. On removing the cup, after a little time, the suffocating effects returned with all their intensity. But the simple cup, without scarifying, produced the same instantaneous relief as at first; and did so ever after this, on a recurrence of the affection. And although this tendency continued at such periods, there was no longer any occasion to call a physician; the dry cup was at hand, the only remedy required to remove the congestive effects and turn the blood into its natural channels.

Dr. Metcalfe's views of bloodletting are presented in the light here indicated, though, as a general rule, he is opposed to the practice. Yet he admits there are circumstances which require prompt reduction of the blood, and the immediate relief afforded, he considers, supports his favorite theory of sanguification, as giving freedom to the function of the lungs, the source of bloodmaking and the generation of caloric.

Neither time nor space will permit me to dwell upon many of the therapeutic agents in use for the cure of fevers. In the limits given to an address of this kind, it becomes expedient to be brief, and let our remarks on remedial means be confined to the most prominent.

Mercury being a remedy of this class, and one that has been bandied about by popular prejudice and public obloquy, it will be necessary to remark somewhat upon it. Although it is admitted that ill results have sometimes followed the administration of this agent, yet I unhesitatingly come out in its defence, and give my feeble testimony in its favor, having seen more decided curative effects from this article than from all other reagents in the *materia medica*, laying this aside. Mercury is not only abused by public clamor, but often by its ill-judged management. It is its misapplication, not the medicine, out of which the main evil arises. It is repudiated by some of the faculty as not carrying out the old hackneyed theory of its operation, that of overpowering diseased action by instituting a new, and the weaker giving way to the stronger; both acting, it being apparent, at the same time, and holding out together, without either yielding. Though this may be the case in some instances, the salts of mercury are nevertheless found, by experience, peculiarly effective in the cure of the fevers incident to this valley. Watson considers calomel as decidedly instrumental in preventing and removing adhesive inflammation, by obviating the effusion of lymph and promoting its absorption. We also learn that calomel, added to venous blood, imparts the qualities of arterial, and is thence viewed as "equivalent to an increase of oxygen." If such be its chemical result upon the blood, it tends to lessen, it is evident, the increase of fibrine in all inflammatory affections, and favors the fluidity of the blood—thereby facilitating the circulation. This theory makes it plain that this medicine is not well adapted to diseases of increased nervous excitability—such as scrofulous affections, neuralgia, &c. But to the fevers attended with vascular congestion or inflammation (characteristics of our lake fevers), it is a valuable reagent.

Although there appears to be a striking analogy between the effusion of lymph and the formation of tubercles, mercury is found not as effec-

tive in removing the latter as the former. Lymph is usually lodged on the serous surfaces, whilst tubercles are deposited in the glands, parenchymatous substances and mucous membranes, though no tissue is exempt. Tubercles not being incorporated with the structures, these being merely displaced, to give room, as it were, for these tumors, become as foreign bodies in the textures where they are lodged; hence they are not directly acted upon by the absorbents; whereas lymph being firmly attached to, if not incorporated with, the tissues, is within the reach of these vessels.

In regard to opium in the treatment of our fevers, there are, perhaps, certain cases in which it is useful; but my experience tells me that it is not often indicated. I have long since witnessed its morbid results, and have learned to place less reliance upon it now, than formerly. Opiates, it is true, are often important auxiliaries in the treatment of some kinds of disease; but alone, they seldom produce any lasting benefit. They may control a cough or check a diarrhoea, but generally fail to cure either.

One other article, important in the treatment of lake fevers, it may be proper to notice, viz., the sulph. quinine. This medicine is resorted to under various circumstances, and its happy effects witnessed. In the incipient stage of fevers, conjoined with calomel or the blue mass, it has appeared instrumental in cutting short the fevers of this valley, especially influenzas. Although physicians at the south-west are in the habitual use of this article in scruple doses in curing the fevers of the climate, yet it is seldom administered in this region beyond three or four grains at a dose. In continued fever, the same favorable results from the quinine are not manifested as in its forming stage, or state of convalescence.

SURGICAL OPERATIONS WITH THE AID OF THE "NEW GAS."

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

DEAR SIR.—The two following cases, occurring in my practice the past week, are of interest as supporting the claims to confidence of Dr. Morton's anodyne compound.

CASE I.—Nov. 19th. An Irish girl, under 20 years of age, in attempting to step into the cars at Hamilton, while they were in motion, fell, with her arm upon the track, and had a compound, comminuted fracture at the elbow, from the wheel of the car. At about 9 in the evening, I amputated in the middle of the humerus. The operation lasted a little longer than if done by daylight, although it was a flap operation and quickly executed. Three vessels were tied. Dr. Fisk, dentist, of this city, accompanied me and caused the patient to inhale the vapor of the compound, about three minutes before the operation commenced. By this time she appeared to have yielded entirely to its influence, and became pale, silent and perfectly passive and manageable, whereas she had before exhibited evidence of great physical suffering and uncontrollable grief. Before the arteries were all tied she appeared to be returning to consciousness, when, on offering the apparatus to her mouth, she seized

it with avidity, respiration rapidly, and soon seemed to relapse into the unconscious state. It was thus renewed four or five times before she was placed in bed. Her own statement is that she suffered no pain during the operation, that she was asleep, and when she awoke she breathed again of what was offered to her and fell asleep again—that she remembers to have done this three times. She says she did not know what we were doing to her, but in her sleep she thought she had got a reaping-hook in her arm, and that she heard the noise of sawing wood. She says she was not sensible of anything till she was laid in bed, when she became quite talkative, and evidently somewhat excited. She slept some hours during the night. On dressing the stump on the third day, she made a violent outcry at the slightest pain. I was convinced that her statements with regard to her freedom from pain during the operation, were to be believed.

II.—Nov. 21st. An intelligent tanner, about 30 years old, had, with a fracture of both bones in the middle of the left leg, his ankle crushed by the cars engaged in building the Salem and Methuen Railroad. I amputated the leg just below the knee. The patient respiration the vapor under Dr. Fisk's directions. He says he was not conscious of feeling any pain—and after the operation was finished and the ligatures applied, his consciousness returned, and, with great apparent sincerity, he asked if his limb was taken off. He says, though he felt no pain, he was conscious of the presence of those around him, and he was obedient to the directions given him. The operation was performed at about 3, P. M., and the stump was dressed at about 9, when, he says, the pain of a few sutures far exceeded that of the operation.

In both these cases the pulse became somewhat accelerated after the operation, the countenance assumed a vacant expression, although in the first case there was working of the brows, and the pupils were dilated. They both appear to be doing well, and exhibit no symptoms worthy of note.

Respectfully yours,

A. L. PEIRSON.

Salem, Nov. 24th, 1846.

Postscript.—November 25th, 1846.

Yesterday, I made further trial of the ethereal vapor, upon a middle-aged female, from whom I removed an adipose tumor, by an incision four inches long over the clavicle and scapula. She was an unimpressive subject, and was less perfectly under the influence of the vapor than the others, but she was entirely bewildered and not able to realize the nature of what we were doing to her. She was much more quiet than patients usually are, although the dissection was somewhat protracted, by the dipping down of the tumor into the supra spinal fossa of the clavicle, and confinement by fascia. She says she felt no pain, and did not evince any perception of the puncture of the needle in dressing the wound—a sensation which usually calls forth complaint, as it is commonly unexpected.

It needs, no doubt, still further careful observation of its effects, to establish medical confidence in the new remedy, a confidence which must

be of slow growth. From the results I have seen at the Massachusetts General Hospital, and in my own practice, I am led to expect the following advantages from its exhibition.

1st. Uniformity of its effects, unlike any mode of intoxication by stimulants in the stomach, or respiration of nitrous-oxide gas. My three patients were as unlike in age, temperament, and habits, as could well be imagined, yet all exhibited the same appearance of passive endurance.

2d. There was no instinctive or voluntary resistance, which is so embarrassing to an operator. This, next to its power of preventing the perception of pain, is the greatest merit claimed for it.

3d. The securing the patient from the severity of the great shock which a capital operation inflicts on the sufferer. It was quite noticeable, in all the patients I have seen, that there was none of that extreme depression which sometimes follows a severely painful impression on the nervous system.

4th. Its effects pass off rapidly, and, as far as I know, no bad results follow.

5th. It can be repeated several times during the operation, except the mouth or jaws are the parts to be operated on. The repetition of the dose is always sought by the patients with avidity.

6th. The last and most important of its effects, is, that it either wholly annuls pain, or destroys the consciousness of it, so that it is not remembered; and thus the sentiment of fear is wholly obliterated. The patient appears to have been dreaming, and in the second case said that "he was in a distinct existence" (i. e., distinct from his former experience), thus illustrating the theory of double consciousness.

These are recommendations enough to ensure it a fair trial among the humane and enlightened members of our profession, and for their decision we must wait, and by it be governed in its future use. Dr. Morton and Dr. Jackson, at least, are entitled to the hearty thanks of the profession for their discovery, and the liberal manner in which they have offered it to all the subjects of surgical operations, both in and out of the Hospital. If some hunter up of obsolete theories should prove that such a thing had before been thought of, or tried, still these gentlemen are entitled to the credit of having made it, for the first time, perfectly available to the suffering, and submitted it to the test of those competent to decide on its merits, without being content to rest its pretensions on non-professional credulity or popular notoriety.

A. L. PEIRSON.

Salem, Nov. 26th, 1846.

THE BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

BOSTON. DECEMBER 2, 1846.

Medical Movements in the Western Part of Massachusetts.—Report says that the National Medical Convention is exceedingly popular every-

where but in Boston. A movement is contemplated in some of the western counties of Massachusetts, to organize and send delegates, without asking leave of the State Medical Society. It is a pity that there cannot be some concert in this matter, and the delegates be the messengers of the Society, instead of representing a disconnected body of professional gentlemen, who have the independence to think differently from the course prescribed to them by those who disapprove of novel movements—who never liked the European Congresses, and who have no idea of aiding or abetting in this illegitimate scheme of consulting together upon the medical affairs of the United States.

Medical Education in the United States.—An address was delivered by Alfred Stillé, M.D., to the students of the Philadelphia Association for Medical Instruction, at the close of the session in 1846, which is something more than a common-place production. It must have been gratifying to Dr. Stillé, that a committee solicited the manuscript for publication, and it redounds to the credit of the class that the merits of the discourse were so generally appreciated. It is, in a measure, a historical account of the time required to study medicine in the old institutions of Europe and America. We learn, by a closing observation, that in the United States, with a population of 20,000,000 of people, there are about thirty medical schools, in which there are probably an average annual number of 4,500 students—1,300 of whom are yearly graduated. In France, with a population of 35,000,000, there are but three medical schools, which graduate only about 700 annually! No wonder there is such a prodigious competition for professional existence.

Berkshire Medical Institution.—The commencement exercises of this flourishing institution, held on Wednesday, the 11th of November, attracted a large and highly intelligent auditory. The anniversary discourse, from the Rev. Dr. Humphrey, on "the necessity of the virtues of *industry* and *punctuality* to professional success," was replete with valuable suggestions, and fully sustained the high reputation of the author. The address before the "Berkshire Medical Association," by Dr. Rockwell, of Lee, one of the Alumni of the College, upon "Medical Association as connected with the elevation of the Profession," was an able and timely production, and was listened to with marked interest. The degrees, to the number of 33, were conferred by the President, Prof. Childs, with a brief and appropriate address. The class in attendance on the session just closed was larger than any previous one, numbering 149.

The honorary degree of M.D. was also conferred on the following gentlemen:—Dr. Alden Skinner, of Conn.; Dr. Vincent Holcomb, of Mass.; Dr. Rhoderick Royce, of N. Y.; Dr. Thomas O. Benjamin, of N. Y.

Medical Circulars and Catalogues.—On the 16th of February the lectures in the Medical School of Maine will commence. The library and cabinet are excellent, the fees reasonable, and the professors devoted to the interest of those who attend at the institution. We observe that Dr. Lee, of New York, delivers the course, the ensuing term, on *Materia*

Prices of Books.—An esteemed subscriber and correspondent in the State of New York has suggested to us the propriety of publishing the prices of the new medical books which are noticed in the Journal, as well as surgical instruments, &c. He says it would be gratifying to a majority of the subscribers, as it is always agreeable to a reading man to know how much expense must be incurred to indulge himself with the profitable stimulus of a new work. This is all very natural, and we perfectly agree with our friend in the advantages which would accrue to readers by the adoption of such a plan, if the aid of booksellers and others concerned could be obtained in carrying it out. Yet we find this cannot be done, nor can we otherwise adopt the plan without the risk of appearing to favor the interest of some particular establishment, to the injury of others. We regret to say, therefore, that the project referred to must be considered for the present as impracticable.

Material for Dissections in New York.—“A looker on in Venice,” in New York, writes that “A speck of war, in the medical horizon, has recently been discovered in this city, which has furnished topic for not a little amusing diplomacy. It seems that in the circular of the Faculty, from the city University (in Broadway, above Bleecker street) the resources of *matériel* for practical anatomy are somewhat magnified, and to give students the hint of their superiority in this department to ‘schools of medicine in almost all parts of the country,’ the Faculty boast that they have laid a mortgage on the ‘large surplus’ heretofore exported to supply distant schools, and somewhat grandiloquently claim a monopoly in the premises, by intimating that they have ‘drawn the attention of the municipal authorities’ to the subject, and put ‘an end to the trade’ and traffic, whence they aver that heretofore the said schools of medicine have been supplied. This harmless circular, which is all very well in the way of a puff, has aroused the ire of the Faculty of Geneva College, who have forthwith entered the arena to dispute the announcement of the New York Faculty, denying the facts stated in their circular, and characterizing the alleged participation of the municipal authorities of the city as a fiction, and hence charging ‘an assumption of power and unprofessional conduct’ upon the Medical Faculty of the University in New York. Whereupon, after sundry passes in diplomatic duelling between the angust parties, the New York Faculty attempt the *amende honorable* by ‘owning the soft impeachment’ in an official letter addressed to the Hon. Mayor of New York, disclaiming any intention in their circular to implicate the city authorities ‘directly or indirectly,’ in their boasted facilities, or to imply deficiency of *matériel* for dissection in ‘any other medical institution.’ They also ask the concurrence of his Honor the Mayor in the propriety of withholding any explanation from Geneva College until their ‘offensive resolutions are withdrawn.’ Whereupon Prof. Webster, of the Geneva Faculty, issues his manifesto to the profession of the city in a circular containing the documents, and announces that as his Faculty have ‘expressed nothing which they can properly retract,’ he contents himself with the exposition of the facts, and deprecates ‘a repetition of aggressions upon the rights and interests’ of his own and other schools hereafter. The war therefore does not seem to be at an end, though to the dis-

interested it seems to be a tempest in a tea-pot, as imbecile as it is unprofession; as impolitic as it is unwise."

Causes of Urinary Calculi.—Having had our attention called to a very elaborate, and as we consider learned paper, by Robert Peter, M.D., Professor of Chemistry in the Transylvania University, that first appeared in the *Western Lancet*, we are glad to know that it is now issued in a pamphlet, and may therefore be extensively circulated. Without especially repeating the whole title of the article, the essential feature in it, and that which is truly most important, the causes of calculi, is taken by us for a caption, and without hesitation, we are frank in saying that Dr. Peter has conferred a lasting favor on the inhabitants of Kentucky and the region about, in which a predisposition to the formation of stone in the bladder is acknowledged to exist; and he has also shown, by this research, that the chemical department of the Lexington School of Medicine is entrusted to a philosopher of enlarged views, as well as a practical chemist, who labors to ameliorate the sufferings of humanity by devotion to his profession.

Alleged Cure for Croup.—In the American Water-Cure Advocate, a leading column is headed thus—"Important Discovery to Parents"—which goes on to relate that Dr. Wigand, of Boston, has published a work, in which a discovery is announced that he cures the croup by cold water, exclusively. After a patient examination of the printed catalogue of Boston physicians, and the Directory for 1846, the name of Wigand has not been found. Yet this name is passed round the ring in the country, for authority in a particular line of practice. If a book has actually been written by this celebrated croup curer, it has made no sensation here, however much it may have moved the waters in Ohio. The locality of the author may be in the neighborhood, perhaps, of the *Mesmeric College*, that was gravely asserted, last season, by distant newspapers, to have been organized in *Billerica street!* of which the very wonderful and very surprising Dr. Dodd was both president and professor. This same Water-Cure Advocate speaks in raptures of the Green Mountain Spring, by D. Mack, as an ably-conducted journal—which is certainly a discovery, since he is the only person who can speak thus and keep his countenance.

To CORRESPONDENTS.—The continuation of Dr. Bethune's cases has been crowded out this week by prior articles and by matter which is claimed to be of more immediate interest. J. H. S. on Mesmerism and Clairvoyance in New York, Dr. Reed's reply to Dr. Gillett, and Dr. Dana, of Boston, on Mesmerism, have been received. Other papers, before acknowledged, will be inserted as soon as space can be found for them.

MARRIED.—At Northampton, Mass., Dr. Porter Underwood to Miss M. C. Abell.—In Charlestown, Mass., Albion P. Chase, M.D., of South Abington, to Miss Ellen R. Yale, of Charlestown.

Report of Deaths in Boston—for the week ending Nov. 28th, 43.—Males, 22—females, 21.—Stillborn, 3. Of consumption, 11—old age, 5—lung fever, 5—convulsions, 2—disease of the bowels, 2—croup, 1—debility, 1—pleurisy fever, 1—accidental, 3—infantile, 1—inflammation of the brain, 1—inflammation of the lungs, 2—bronchitis, 2—marasmus, 1—inflammation of the bowels, 1—apoplexy, 1—teething, 1—intemperance, 1—ulcers, 1.

Under 5 years, 12—between 5 and 20 years, 3—between 20 and 40 years, 12—between 40 and 60 years, 8—over 60 years, 8.

Colvin's Abdominal Supporter.—Mr. Bartlett, of Boston, an ingenious manufacturer of trusses, supporters, &c., has brought to our notice an instrument made by Mr. E. Colvin, of Granville, N. Y., which he thinks has some peculiarities that give it a decided advantage over most of the patterns known to that class of invalids who wear them. There is a small steel spring on the front side of the abdominal pad, that acts upon a ratchet in a way to press the under edge at any required angle, so as to make a kind of shelf, as it were, for the bowels to rest upon. The strap by which it is kept in place, passing round the body just above the hips, is no common specimen of ingenuity. It has twelve short spiral springs or India rubber cords, it is difficult to determine which, that always keep the belt snugly fitted. In short, it is a well-made, and promises to be a favorite instrument.

Combination of Carbonate of Iron with Sulphate of Quinine in Remittent Fever.—Prof. Lippich, of Padua, recommends the addition of the carbonate of iron to the sulphate of quinine, in the treatment of periodical fevers. The following is his formula : R. Carbonate of iron, one gramme; sulphate of quinine, one gramme; extract of taraxacum, q. s. To be made into a mass of proper consistency, and divided into thirty pills, two of which are to be taken every two hours. The carbonate of iron may be gradually increased to two grammes.—*Gaz. Med. de Paris.*

Medical Miscellany.—The cholera is making frightful ravages at Medina and Mecca.—The physicians of Lunenburg Co., Virginia, have had a public meeting to elect delegates to the next National Medical Convention. They warmly approve of the objects contemplated.—The Memphis Inquirer says that both the Medical Schools in that city, chartered by the Legislature of Tennessee, the last session, have commenced operations with flattering prospects. How many students has each? Nashville would seem the natural locality—and pray why does not the Medical College existing there theoretically, as a Department of the University, commence a course of lectures?—The Diet of Frankfort has voted 200,000 florins to Dr. Schonbein and Dr. Böttiger, for inventing the explosive cotton—the manufacture of which every one is now copying.—A very troublesome disease of the eyes is now rife in New Jersey—which is probably some form of ophthalmia.—It seems that the War Department may be somewhat annoyed by persons wishing employment as surgeons in the Army. What will become of all the young doctors if some outlet is not found for them?—Dr. Nathan Holmes, of St. Louis, Mo., announces that whiskey, or any other stimulus, freely given till there is a high pulse, will cure the bite of the rattlesnake. He says that he doubts whether fifty rattlesnakes could poison a man when fully drunk.—A colored man lately died near Centreville, Maryland, at the age of 122.—Dr. McNairy, of Nashville, Tenn., was deputed lately to present a vase to Mr. Clay, by the ladies of Tennessee.—The mystery of nature, advertised to be seen in Boston, and declared to be the wonder and admiration of the medical and scientific men of Europe and the United States—the right hand representing an eagle's claw and the left a lobster's—is simply a malformation; one hand is furnished with a thumb and one finger, and the other with three—no more resembling the extremity of a lobster's leg, or an eagle's, than the horn of a rhinoceros.